DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 120 932 EA 008 078

AUTHOR Tyser, Arlington G.
TITLE Grading and Ranking Procedure in Beatrice, Nebraska.
PUB DATE Feb 76
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (60th, Washington, D.C., February 13-18, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Achievement Rating; Flexible Progression; Grades (Scholastic); *Grading; Senior High Schools
IDENTIFIERS Nebraska (Beatrice)

ABSTRACT

Beatrice high school is faced with the need to provide class ranking for students at the same time that it has courses at three levels of difficulty for the normal student and at a fourth level for the educable mentally handicapped. In order to develop an equitable class-ranking system, an honor point system was adopted to relate grades in more difficult classes to grades in less difficult classes. This system allows the full range of grades to be given in classes at each difficulty level. In order to avoid basing class rank on grade point alone, the system also considers the number of classes a student takes. The result has been to encourage students concerned about high class-standing to take more courses, to take courses of high difficulty, and to earn the highest grades possible. (Author/IRT)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED120932

Presentation at the National Association of Secondary School Principal's Meeting
February 1976

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

GRADING AND RANKING PROCEDURE IN BEATRICE, NEBRASKA

Arlington G. Tyser

I represent a small rural high school in Beatrice, Nebraska with an enrollment of about 750 students. Since this is the only high school serving this community, it must be comprehensive in so far as possible. About 40% of our students go on to post high school training. We are involved in ranking our students because the University of Nebraska still uses rank in class as a major factor in determining regent scholarship winners and a number of private colleges in Nebraska offer scholarships to students in the top ten percent of the class. We haven't had a black in school in 20 years, have about six with Spanish surnames, one or two orientals, and no Indians so you see our situation and school population differs somewhat from that with which most of you deal.

I am going to talk to you about the grade weighting and ranking procedures we have evolved over the past 15 years. Prior to that time we were using a five point grading scale applied to all classes and very little was being done to adjust the curriculum to the varying needs and backgrounds of the students. Then the movement to adjust the school program to meet the needs of students reached us. It appeared to have possibilities, and our school began to move in that direction by developing courses in several academic areas at different difficulty levels. After experimenting for some time, we evolved courses at three difficulty levels for the so called normal student and a fourth level for what we call the educable mentally handicapped. These levels are aimed briefly as follows:

Level One: (accelerated) Designed for the capable students, many of whom (perhaps 2/3) plan to continue their education through college or university. This group usually includes 30 to 40% of the student body. This is not an advanced placement type of select group.

EA 008 078

Level Two: (regular) Designed for the "average" student who may or may not be college bound. A number are career-oriented toward vocations for which post high school training is indicated, but probably less than a third of them will attend school immediately following graduation. This level will generally include about 50% of the student body so you see it will include many performing in the lower quartile, but probably not many with serious multiple educational handicaps.

Level Three: (remedial) Designed for students who experience a rather significant degree of reading difficulty and certain other academic learning problems. Depth and scope are not emphasized. Improvement of learning skills receives great emphasis. This group will generally include 10% or less of the student body.

Level Four: (special education) Designed with special modifications for students who must be given an unusual degree of assistance and encouragement. This level of training is not adequate to prepare students for post high school training except in those vocations where reading and numeric competencies are not primary factors for success. This group will generally contain 2% or less of our students.

The levels of difficulty in academic courses are real and intended to encourage individual success and advancement. Upward movement is encouraged when it appears to be possible. Students are encouraged to exploit the maximum of their potential. We try to have courses in a given level comparably demanding from one discipline to another and the student is allowed to elect the difficulty level he wishes to attempt. So far what I have described differs little from what many of you are doing.

The adoption of courses consciously designed to be more or less difficult created evaluation problems. Applying a single five point grading scale to a group of classes taught at varying levels of difficulty caused many of our teachers to give only high grades or marks in high difficulty classes and low grades to low difficulty classes. Many teachers believed that students in the low difficulty classes did not deserve a grade higher than average no matter how well the students

performed. Also in order to have the grades equitably contribute to a ranking system based on grade point average, they tended to give only high grades in high difficulty classes. Students soon developed attitude problems. Students in high difficulty classes became complacent, knowing they wouldn't get very low grades. Students in less difficult classes became discouraged because no matter how hard they tried or how well they performed the tasks they were asked to do in these classes, they would get grades only in the lower range.

In response to this problem, after the staff rejected the idea of taking effort into consideration as a major factor in a student's grade because it was impossible to assess; a staff member, Mrs. Pauline Hawley, suggested we adopt a separate grading scale for each of the four basic difficulty levels and relate grades from one level to another using an honor point system. We retained the following grading scale with which we were familiar and which is in no way unique:

1 --	superior or	100% - 93%
2 --	above average or	92% - 86%
3 --	average or	85% - 78%
4 --	below average or	77% - 70%
5 --	failing or	69% - 0

From this point on I will describe what may be different or new to some of you. This conventional grading scale was applied to classes at each level of difficulty. In other words a student in a Level III class would be awarded a "1", a superior grade, if he performed his assigned tasks well even though these tasks might be quite elementary by Level I standards, and a student in a Level I class might be awarded a "5" for a performance that might exceed what was considered satisfactory for a Level III student. I will expand on this in a moment.

An honor point system was adopted to relate grades in more difficult classes to grades in those which were less difficult. Following is the honor point scale

we use to weight grades given in each difficulty level.

Honor Points Per Hour Credit	Grades in Level I	Grades in Level II	Grades in Level III	Grades in Level IV
8	1			
7	2			
6	3	1		
5	4	2		
4		3	1	
3		4	2	
2			3	
1			4	
0	5	5	5	1-5

For those of you more familiar with the Carnegy Unit, we consider ten semester hours to be the equivalent to one Carnegy Unit.

Adopting this scale promoted the awarding of the full range of grades to students at each difficulty level. By examining this scale you will notice that no grade in levels 2, 3, or 4 are awarded as many honor points per semester hour as a grade of "1" or "2" in level I. You will also note that an average grade in level I is awarded exactly as many honor points as a superior grade in level II. You will also notice that the two lowest passing grades in level III carry fewer honor points than any passing grade in the two higher levels and that no grade in level IV classes receives any honor points.(We do award credit toward high school completion to students in level IV classes but they are awarded a special diploma.) This caused student's attitudes to improve and their performances became more realistic. Some of you will conclude that this amounts to no more than adopting an eight point grading scale. This is true to a certain extent but is not entirely so.

This is the beginning of what we do differently. We could compute honor point average just as we used to figure grade point average and rank students. We chose not to do so. As a school staff and student body, we had also become dissatisfied with grade point average as a means of determining class rank primarily because it rewarded those who chose to take a minimum numbers of hours of class work in judiciously selected courses rather than those who exposed themselves as widely as

possible to the learning opportunities our school offered. We abandoned grade point average as a method of determining class rank and adopted in its stead a cumulative honor point total. This approach was adopted upon the recommendation of a committee of students and staff after thorough study of options, and the recommendation was nearly unanimous by both groups involved. Cumulative honor point total can probably best be explained by showing you how the honor point total might be computed for a typical student for a given semester.

Student Class Level	Course Difficulty Level (Course #)	Course Title	1st Quarter Grade	2nd Quarter Grade	1st Semester Grade	Semester Hours Credit		Honor Points Per Cr. Hour		Honor Points Per Course
12	2	American Lit	2	2+	2	5.0	x	5	=	25 Honor points
12	1	Algebra II	2	2-	2-	4.0	x	7	=	28 Honor points
12	1	Chemistry	2+	1	2	6.0	x	7	=	42 Honor points
12	2	Mechanical Draft	2	1-	1-	5.5	x	6	=	33 Honor points
12	1	Psychology	3	2-	3+	5.0	x	5	=	30 Honor points
12	2	Boys Glee	2	2	2	2.5	x	5	=	12.5 Honor points
12	2	Football	2	2	2	2.0	x	5	=	10 Honor points
12	2	Orchestra W P		1	1	1.2	x	6	=	7.2 Honor points
12	2	Band	1	1	1	4.3	x	6	=	25.8 Honor points
		Total Credit Hours				35.5				213.5 Total honor points

You will notice that in order to assign an honor point value to any grade or mark you must first refer to the third digit in the course number to determine the difficulty level of the course. If the third digit is a "2" it indicates that the course is of level II difficulty and is therefore given an honor point evaluation

accordingly, etc. The honor points accumulated each semester are added to the sum previously accumulated, and a senior's final rank is determined by this total as compared to those of other members of the class. Every subject for which a student receives credit toward graduation is included in this computation. The use of the honor point total in ranking students and the system for relating the difficulty of courses taught at one level to courses taught at other difficulty levels are the things we are doing that may differ from those practices used in many other schools.

The result of this change has been to encourage those students concerned about high class standing to take more courses, to take courses of high difficulty, and to earn the highest grades possible. We feel that these are the things good students should strive to do.

As you know there is no system that is altogether fair to everyone. This is no exception.

The biggest problems we have with this system are:

1. It is difficult to make sure courses are equitably demanding. This is true, however, regardless of the ranking system you use.
2. It causes resentment on the part of students and patrons who feel the old system was more to their advantage.
3. It encourages students who really can't handle the work to take the maximum number of courses at the highest difficulty level in order to try to enhance their class rank.
4. It gives an advantage to those students who participate in classes for which they receive credit that take place outside of the regular school day. Athletics and work study programs are examples.

The greatest advantages of this approach are:

1. It gives us a way to incorporate classes of varying difficulty into a rational ranking procedure.

2. It rewards those students who take more difficult courses, those who study a greater number of subjects, and those who exhibit the best scholarship.
3. It encourages students to take maximum advantage of the opportunities offered them in school.
4. It adapts well to individualized classes and individually paced classes in incorporating them into the ranking procedure.